



Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Limited

Private and Confidential: No

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Chief Executive's Update and Marketing Coverage
(Appendices 'A' and 'B' refer)

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Executive Summary

This report provides the Board with updates in two areas: -

- In year progress on the key elements of the 2023/24 Business Plan not dealt with elsewhere in specific reports
- A marketing update and compendium of press coverage relating to LEP activity in the same period.

LEP staff continue to progress and deliver these work programmes, within the financial envelope set out in the business plan. Further commissions, potentially extending beyond the end of March 2024 are also detailed for the confirmation and approval of the LEP Board on the assumption that these remain key development programmes for Lancashire and will be picked up as part of the integration process.

Recommendation

The Lancashire Enterprise Partnership Board are recommended to note this report and approve a further tendering exercise to procure further consultancy support in respect of developing the Lancashire Cyber eco-system and advancing the plans for an Innovation Hub at Samesbury which has now secured £6m of capital funding as part of the agreement with government on progressing a devolution deal.

Background and Advice

The stipulation of the LEP Board in respect of the 2023/24 Business Plan was that the organisation should be clearly seen as "open for business" but do this with due regard to continuing to derive best value from the use of public funds. As instructed the LEP extended its capacity through the recruitment of interns and the cover of key vacant roles by secondees. This has allowed the year to date to be one of high paced activity and impact, which features heavily within and contributes to the key themes that a new Combined County Authority will pursue.



Progress on LEP Key Priorities

At its meeting in June, the LEP identified the following activities as priority workstreams for 2023/24 financial year, over and above the typical running costs and subscriptions of the company.

1.1 National Cyber Force - £425,000 (pays for development of Innovation Hub concept £350k, Industry Engagement £75k)

This work will build on an initial scoping piece for an Innovation Hub to be developed adjacent to the new NCF Headquarters at Samlesbury. The initial study conducted by cyber specialists Plexal, identified a strong rationale for such a facility to act as a touchpoint for local industrial collaboration both with NCF and their supply chain. It also considered the options to co-locate with other anchor tenants and amenity uses for NCF.

This additional commitment of funding, will allow further phases of work to bring the plans for this building to full, "Green Book" business case and with sufficient detail for initial planning consideration (albeit that the EZ remains subject to streamline planning via a Local Development Order).

Progress

LEP funds continue to be instrumental in providing a flexible response to the opportunity presented by National Cyber Force HQ coming to Lancashire.

Ongoing support from Plexal – Plexal have continued to provide consultancy support in respect of NCF continuing to develop the business case for the Innovation Hub, developing a concept of how Cyber can be positioned with other sectors to create a unique Cyber Physical / Secure by Design concept for the positioning of the county.

Working as part of the Lancashire Cyber Partnership's Industry Collaboration workstream, LEP funding was instrumental in mobilising the business activity within the first **Lancashire Cyber Festival**.

In early December, in order to advance the work and understanding of partners around the shared spin-out opportunities presented by NCF, the LEP lead a **familiarisation visit to Cheltenham** to see existing and planned business accommodation / incubators. The Lancashire delegation include representatives from BAE, UCLAN, Lancaster University, as well as local authority reps from LCC, Blackburn, Blackpool and Chorley / South Ribble.

Given the imperative to spend the £6m that has been earmarked for the development of an Innovation Hub within the devolution deal, the board and members approval to proceed with a further round of tendering for project support is requested. This work will start in the current financial year but may extend beyond the 31st March 2024. It will however remain within the overall financial envelope set in the 23/24 Business Plan. The full cost of the project and the



funding package for the delivery and operation of the Hub will be a matter for the governance structures in place at that time.

1.2 Inward Investment and Internationalisation - £150k (pays for Capabilities mapping £50k, External Marketing Proposition £50k, refresh Invest in Lancashire web £25k, Internationalisation Intern £25k)

Capacity to advance the work on key web domains has been earmarked for early in the new year, to update Invest In Lancashire and Visit Lancashire websites.

The work advanced by the internationalisation interns is presented separately within the agenda.

a. Sector work development - £180k (pays for, Bid awareness and writing £120k, AEM support £60k)

Currently exploring a range of activity across sector including grants to business for the development of low carbon goods and services and work to promote and launch the Tourism Development Strategy in Spring 24, built on the work of that sector group and contributing to the work programme of the newly established LVEP,

b. Lancashire Data Observatory - £200k

Work continues to properly establish the data observatory and ensure that Lancashire has access to key data sets, both public and commercial. We are seeking to gain accreditation with ONS as a Assured Organisation, giving access to wider and more in depth data sets.

c. Devolution / CCA Project Development £109,416

The balance of the LEP's revenue budget will be applied to the process of influencing and supporting the development of Lancashire's initial and subsequent rounds of devolution deals, landing the policy development work and private sector work of the Board within this landscape.

A commission to understand how other areas have used their devolved Adult Skills Budget has just been initiated lead by colleagues in the Skills and Employment Hub.

LEP PR and Communications Activity - Update

2.1 At the last board meeting, members raised the issue of LEP PR and communications to ensure the profile of the LEP's activity continues until its cessation in March 2024. It is therefore timely to provide an overview of communications activity and coverage over the past 6 months. Despite reducing our investment in PR and comms, the LEP has continued to maintain a high profile as the county's 'voice of business'. It has also continued to undertake both proactive media and partner communication engagement activity, whilst



maintaining a responsive and 'always on' reactive press office function. This has been achieved through the support of our retained communications consultant Richard Bond. Examples of coverage during this period can be found in [Appendices 'A' \(general\) and 'B' \(Lancashire Cyber Partnership\)](#) to this report, however in summary:

- 2.2 Major PR projects and campaigns since July have included an overhaul of the *Growing Places Fund* customer offer and marketing collateral, the publication of the Lancashire Innovation Board's new five year *Lancashire Innovation Plan*, and the recent Lancashire Cyber Festival/ Lancashire Cyber Partnership launch ([Appendix 'B'](#)). All of these projects have enjoyed high levels of positive media coverage, as have LEP-supported projects such as new Lancashire Funding Hub, and TechUK's Local Digital Index report launch.
- 2.3 In August, the LEP's quick and assertive response to the government's announcement regarding the end of LEP funding – including a statement from Debbie Francis highlighting the need for the private sector to continue to play a central role in any future local government arrangements in Lancashire – was picked up by local, regional and national trade media.
- 2.4 The end of LEP funding also saw *Lancashire Business View* run several articles and comment pieces on the performance of the LEP in Lancashire since inception, including asking business leaders what they thought of the LEP's track record.
- 2.5 The overall sentiment was that the LEP in Lancashire had brought many tangible benefits to the county, and had been performed particularly strongly in recent years. Any overt criticism also tended to be levelled more at the nature of Local Enterprise Partnerships themselves as 'flawed' government vehicles for inward investment, rather than being down to any Lancashire-specific weaknesses.
- 2.6 Through the LEP, *The Financial Times'* northern correspondent, Jennifer Williams, undertook a Lancashire fact-finding visit in August which included meetings with myself and several LEP board members. Her itinerary, which was developed in partnership with Lancashire County Council, included visits to AMRC North West, UCLan, and County Hall.
- 2.7 In addition to which, over the last six months, the LEP's LinkedIn activity has been increased, with much more strategic use of organic LinkedIn LEP content, amplification/comment on relevant partner content, and the tagging of key influencers and organisations, to drive engagement and reinforce key messages.
- 2.8 The LEP has also continued to supply partners with supportive quotes from Debbie Francis for inclusion in their own media announcements linked to investment and regeneration milestones from our Growth Deal and Getting Building Fund programmes, as well as other investment programmes such as the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund. This has ensured the LEP's positioning



as an enabler of growth has continued via third-party PR activity across the County.

- 2.9 Going forward, Martine Winder as the LEP's communications lead is continuing to work with Richard Bond and other officers to develop a proactive forward plan of communications activity aligned to anticipated milestones for all areas of the LEP's work, as well as the production of a LEP review document which will celebrate some of the LEP's more recent achievements and how the partnership approach adopted by the LEP, including business, has made a significant contribution to Lancashire's economic prosperity and provided the foundations for future economic growth.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A